

History of Head Start

[Music playing]

E. Dollie Wolverton: When I think about the history of Head Start, I really get very nostalgic because I remember the fervor that we felt that spring. We got word that this legislation had been passed. It was part of the War on Poverty, and that we were going to have a role, we thought, in eradicating poverty. And we were going to start with very young children in a program called Head Start.

[Music playing]

E. Dollie: The thing that I remember the most was about the wisdom that went into the planning of this program, and it all started with the convening of a group called the Cook Committee. And they had the wisdom to see that you needed a healthy child to have a child that would be prepared to learn, that you had to involve the parents to really be supportive of that child's development and learning, and also that the parents, in turn, would learn from being part of such a comprehensive program.

Helen Maynor (Scheirbeck): Head Start is such a wonderful program for all children in America, and in particular, for native children, because it gives them a chance to learn about their culture, their language, and it has a social service program that catches health issues very early. And that has been so significant for all children in America.

Hank Aguirre: I was the migrant coordinator for several years, and then I became director of the Indian Migrant Programs Division in the late '70s to the early '80s. Most of our centers were open 10, 12, 14 hours, based on the working hours of the farm workers. When the standards came in, we did develop a curriculum specifically designed for the mobile population.

Mary Lewis: If you individualize for every child in the Head Start program, then no child gets to flunk Head Start. No way. And that is a real success, in my opinion, when people understand that the individualization not only covers children with very special needs, but it covers every child, and makes every child a winner and every parent happy.

[Music playing]

Diane Trister Dodge: The amazing thing about Head Start is that, from the very beginning, the principles on which it was founded have remained true. That belief that we need comprehensive services for children who come out of poverty homes, that we need to spend time thinking not only about their educational needs, but social services, parent involvement, health needs, and nutrition. The whole comprehensive approach at Head Start was there right from the beginning and that was absolutely right.

Jenni Klein: I really thought we were going to change the world for children, and I do think we made a great deal of difference. There should be more programs like Head Start because it says

that no matter where the families come from, what their income is, what their skills are, that children can develop fully if you help them with good programs.

Narrator: We hope this inspires you to contact your organization's executive director and Head Start director to make arrangements to visit your Head Start program, so that you can see for yourself all that Head Start has to offer.